

MED Week '93

1993 Minority Enterprise Development Week

Tri-Met's Walsh To Present Minority Business Award

Tri-Met General Manager Tom Walsh will present the 1993 Minority Enterprise Development Week Award for Outstanding Business Development to Mr. Isadore Aguirre, president of MRC Company, at the Oct. 6 Minority Enterprise Week luncheon in the Oregon Convention Center.

MRC, currently a subcontractor to the Frontier-Traylor joint venture on the Westside MAX tunnel project, is based in Wood-

land, WA. The firm was established eight years ago in Beaverton and has been successful in performing railroad construction work throughout Oregon, Washington, Colorado and California.

MRC will be responsible for installing light rail track in the Westside MAX tunnel. At \$2.9 million, their work ranks among the four largest tunnel subcontracts.

MRC was recommended to Frontier-Traylor during the tunnel bidding period by one of Tri-Met's mi-

nority business outreach contractors. Four services have been engaged to provide technical assistance to minority and other disadvantaged business enterprises seeking Westside project contracts.

"It's a great honor to present this award to Mr. Aguirre and MRC," Walsh said. "The award recognizes MRC's outstanding reputation for quality of work, competitive pricing, responsiveness to customer needs and meeting work schedules. This is exactly the kind of firm we're pleased to

have on board doing light rail construction," he commented.

"Sofar, we are extremely pleased with the results coming from the Westside DBE outreach program," Walsh continued. "Over 50% of subcontracting dollars on the tunnel contract are going to DBE firms." Six DBE firms currently are on the Frontier-Traylor tunnel team. Nearly 13% of tunnel contract dollars are going to DBE firms-significantly above the 11% goal for that contract.

By next July some \$13 million is

targeted for DBE contracts and subcontracts for Westside project work. Businesses interest in learning more about Westside MAX contracting opportunities are invited to contact Lina Garcia Seabold at 239-2165.

Minority Enterprise Development Week, Oct. 3-9, was proclaimed by President Bill Clinton to honor economic contributions to our nation made by minority businesses. Tri-Met is a cosponsor of the Oct. 6 luncheon, along with the local offices of the U.S. Small Business Admin-

istration and Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Administration, Intel Corp., IMPACT, Inc., Metro and the Metro Exposition-Recreation Commission, Minority Business Opportunity Committee, Multnomah County, the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, Oregon & SW Washington Minority Purchasing Council, Portland Federal Executive Board, and the State of Oregon's Office of Minority, Women, and Emerging Small Business.

Blacks Are The Minority In Minority Business

Last week's article described an Oregon business climate that left much to be desired in terms of basic economic opportunity for any segment of the population black white or whoever ("Minority Business In A Minority Economy"). And we spoke of so little of the state's major industry being "owned by Oregonians." Hence more outflow of capital.

There was even less enchantment with the fact that the investment policy of the state's largest pension funds has seemed dedicated to financing eastern business interests in taking over successful Oregon enterprises. And certainly that Lottery-financed Economic Development Scheme which was to produce tens of thousands of jobs and other economic returns has been one of the most disappointing of all the excursions into high finance by highly paid, but

amateurish, administrators. The governor is not sharp on nutrition--she has yet to cut the fat.

Under these circumstances, if would seem that much of the populace is left on its own; especially those who in a period of general economic downturn might have depended upon relevant state agencies to provide a high level of aid, direction and commitment. "Small Business Development" immediately comes to mind since it has been repeatedly demonstrated to be the principal and fastest source of jobs.

"Turning ideas into paychecks" has been a primary theme of mine throughout the years I've been writing this column. As there will continue to be in the future, there have been many "hands on/nuts and bolts" essays on how to operate particular enterprises; many based upon actual

experience and all gaining from in-depth research. It has been rewarding to find that over this period of time, a number of both readers and/or students of my related university business courses have used such guidelines to structure their own enterprises.

Several of these successful entrepreneurs (both black and white) have informed me that a key inspiration was my recitation of early business and industrial developments by African Americans who consistently overcame twice the odds faced today. ("Like man, what's my excuse?"). It is not that I do not furnish my current models of success, along with appropriate information systems, but it is so rewarding that this generation is rediscovering those industrious and committed brothers and sister who have enabled us to survive thus far. In

next week's "Minority Business Section" I will dedicate an entire article to some of the amazing feats of these pioneers (with pictures--factories and other enterprises a hundred years ago).

For now, I want to refer to a particular area of my business experience and that it interfaces with other minorities--this is a very important perspective to be able to bring to the commercial arena when many African Americans are feeling so threatened by the ever-increasing numbers of immigrants. My multicultural workforce experience began in the fifties in Los Angeles, mostly with Hispanics or Asians in such various relationships as fellow employee, supervisor or professional.

The numbers in those days were insufficient to create tensions between races, but, now, the tide has risen so swiftly in many areas of the country

that African Americans are expressing considerable apprehension of overpowering competition both for jobs and in the marketplace for small business. Some aspects of the anticipated economic threat are turning quite real, especially in densely populated urban areas where blacks have been "low man on the totem pole when it comes to getting commercial bank loans. And it has provoked a high level of resentment when the newcomers, many with language difficulties, are able to walk into financial institutions and secure financing with little problem--while college-educated sons and daughters of black families, some established for generations, are turned down.

Later this fall I will be writing a series here that will also be published nationally, "Immigration And The Black Economic Experience." It is

going to be as obvious to Portland Blacks as is demonstrated already in a number of California and eastern urban centers that the threat of further economic disparities is quite real. Whereas more (perhaps alert) black business persons in these cities are coming to grips with this problem head on (with the banks, states and governmental agencies), concern in Portland seems exclusively involved with home mortgages.

It would seem that a successful Minority Business effort requires and extraordinarily broad effort on the part of some extraordinarily broad individuals who apparently should have no ties or obligations to the establishment, public or private agency. The phrase was authored millenniums ago by an ancient African who wrote it in stone, "To thine own self be true."

BLACK CONTRACTORS ALLIANCE

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